



Washington State Legislature

The Honorable Christine Gregoire
Governor of Washington
P.O. Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

June 9, 2010

Dear Governor Gregoire:

We are writing to urgently seek your immediate help in convening a law enforcement summit with the goal of creating a coordinated effort to effectively fight the criminal gang activity plaguing the Yakima area.

The people of Yakima are paralyzed with intense fear that emanates from living inside a violent and deadly war zone filled with flying bullets shot from the guns of gang members. Our residents are horribly afraid of stepping outside of their homes and into their yards, getting into their cars, going to work, and conducting their normal daily, lawful activities. Moreover, parents are terrified for the safety of their children.

It's estimated more than 2,500 gang members are active in Yakima County, and more than half of those are in the city of Yakima. We know that at least 14 people have died in our area since the beginning of the year from gang-related violence, and last year was one of the bloodiest years in our county with more than 25 homicide victims. Countless others have been injured, some permanently and severely.

The May 30 cold-blooded, gang-related execution-style murder of an 18-year-old Yakima boy, who begged for his life in front of his family's home before being shot repeatedly, says it all. WE NEED HELP! And we need it NOW!

Despite the best efforts of local law enforcement, gangs are rapidly gaining a powerful foothold in our communities, grooming our children into a life of violence, and increasing their numbers and strength. If we do not act now and decisively, criminal street gangs will prevail in this war, leaving a path of death and destruction in their wake.

Efforts are underway to add an FBI-administered Violent Gang Safe Streets Task Force to the Yakima area to help local law enforcement. While we fully support this move, the U.S. Attorney's office says the earliest this task force can be in place is in the fall of 2010, provided it is approved by the U.S. Justice Department in Washington, D.C.

Our communities cannot stand idly by and wait for lengthy approval processes while more people die and families live in fear of additional massacres in our streets. As elected leaders, it is our duty to uphold and preserve the safety of the citizens we serve. We need to act now. That's why we are asking for your immediate help.

Please immediately call for and convene a *Criminal Street Gang Enforcement Summit* to address the imminent and dire threat gangs are posing to our communities across the state, especially in the Yakima Valley area.

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We ask that you urgently request representatives from the following agencies to participate in the summit:

Governor's office
14th District legislators
Yakima Police Chief Sam Granato
Yakima County Sheriff Ken Irwin
Washington State Patrol
Washington State Attorney General's office
United States Attorney General's office
U.S. Department of Justice
Federal Bureau of Investigation
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
Drug Enforcement Administration
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
U.S. Customs and Border Protection
U.S. Marshals Service
Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys
Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs
Washington Council for Police and Sheriffs

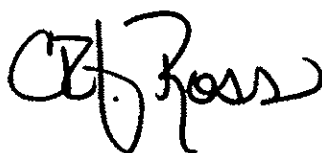
We ask that the representatives of the summit work cooperatively together to create a coordinated, cohesive plan that marshals all available law enforcement resources to effectively locate, root out, investigate, arrest and prosecute entire gangs, from the street-level thugs and dealers up through the crew leaders, and ultimately, the command structure of local gangs. We need a strong, decisive and intensive law enforcement plan that utilizes the expertise and resources of these departments to sweep our streets of criminal gangs who are destroying the Yakima area.

Please call this summit immediately to expedite the help so desperately needed by our Yakima-area law enforcement to deter violent gangs and bring to justice those who have spread this epidemic throughout our local communities. Our future depends on it!

Sincerely,



Norm Johnson
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14th Legislative District
(360) 786-7810



Charles Ross
State Representative
14th Legislative District
(360) 786-7856



Curtis King
State Senator
14th Legislative District
(360) 786-7626

Cc: Washington Attorney General Rob McKenna; Yakima Assistant Mayor Kathy Coffey; Yakima Councilwoman Maureen Adkison; Yakima Councilman Bill Lover